TE AHUREI TOI O TĀMAKI
AUCKLAND
ARTS FESTIVAL

2026



Music Portrait of a Humble Disabled Samoan

Music Portrait of a Humble Disabled Samoan

By Music Portrait Collective

Lead Creative/Performer
Fonotī Pati Umaga QSM

Creative Producer
Sasha Gibb

Director
Maiava Nathaniel Lees

Writer
Oscar Kightley MNZM

Choreographer
Neil Ieremia ONZM

Composer
Matuaitoga Posenai Mavaega MNZM

Lighting Designer
Jane Hakaraia

AV Content Editor
Ella Dove

Excerpt from ‘Sweet Lovers in the Night’ by Holidaymakers.
Produced by Nigel Stone. Video Director Fane Flaws. Label Pagan Records.

Excerpts from *An Immigrant Nation*. From material preserved and made available by Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision. Courtesy of TVNZ, NZ On Air & Top Shelf Productions LTD.

Thu 5 — Sun 8 March 2026
Rangatira, Q Theatre

1hr approx no interval.

Production Manager
Will Smith

Associate Production Manager
Mitch Sigley

Associate Producer/Stage Manager
Kasi Valu

Technical Operator
Tom Smith

Performers/Collaborators
Mere Boynton
Paris Tuimaseve-Fox
Lavinia Lovo
Albert Latailakepa
Faith Tou

Musicians/Collaborators
Meka Nehemia
Hayden Nickel
Andy Mauafua
Isitolo Alesana

Cover image: pictured left-to-right, Oscar Kightley, Sasha Gibb, Neil Ieremia, Nathaniel Lees, Fonotī Pati Umaga. Photographed by Lou Hatten.

Commissioned by Te Ahurei Toi o Tāmaki Auckland Arts Festival and Aotearoa New Zealand Festival of the Arts, with support from Creative New Zealand's Festival Commissioning and Presentation Fund managed by Performing Arts Network New Zealand.

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Network New Zealand

Music Portrait of a Humble Disabled Samoan is presented at Te Ahurei Toi o Tāmaki Auckland Arts Festival with support from Platinum Patrons Andrew & Jenny Smith.

EYES
SIVA
artiga

About Fonotī Pati Umaga

Musician and disability advocate Fonotī Pati Umaga is a first-generation NZ born Samoan whose parents come from the villages of Leulumoega and Vailima. He grew up in Wainuiomata, Wellington and has a background in youth and community work having worked with street kids for the Anglican Social Services and then for Hutt City Council.

Growing up in a Samoan church-going family in Wainuiomata, Pati was expected to follow his father's direction and become a minister. But his heart belonged to music. Determined to carve his own path, he broke into the industry, started his own music label and built a promising career. Yet, as opportunities faded, Pati returned to Wellington to rediscover himself.

Pati's journey is deeply intertwined with the broader struggles and triumphs of Pacific and Māori communities in Aotearoa. His experiences reflect the challenges of identity and belonging as a Samoan navigating life in a country where racism and systemic barriers have long shaped the experiences of Pacific peoples. Coming of age during times of social and political revolution — from the Dawn Raids to the rise of Māori and Pacific activism — Pati's story is a testament to the resilience of Indigenous and migrant communities fighting for recognition and space. As a musician, he was part of a generation of Māori and Pacific

artists carving out their place in the industry, pushing against limitations to create a sound and identity that was distinctly their own.

Then, in May 2005, his life changed forever. A fall in the shower left him a tetraplegic and wheelchair user. Struggling with depression and addiction, he faced years of hardship before finding renewed purpose in advocacy. Through the support of the disabled community, he reclaimed his strength and has since become a champion for Pacific people with disabilities.

In 2012, he was awarded a QSM for services to the Pacific community. In 2013, Pati was appointed by Minister Tariana Turia as one of four Whānau Ora champions. In 2019 he was the inaugural winner of the CNZ Pacific Arts Toa Awards and that same year was inducted into the Attitude Awards Hall of Fame.

Pati co-founded the Whitireia Community Polytechnic Contemporary Music Programme and had a record label “Pacific Nation Records” working with artists Te Vaka, Jamoa Jam and Lole Usoali’i.

Using music as the heartbeat of storytelling, this multidisciplinary Pacific theatre work tells the extraordinary life story of Pati Umaga — musician, advocate, and leader.

From the Director

Talofa lava and tēnā koutou,

It has been an honour to bring together this story of the life of Fonotī Pati Umaga. The willingness of such talented creators to be part of this project is an indication of the esteem that our artistic community has for Fonotī and his journey to this point in his life.

My deep respect and thanks
to Neil Ieremia, Oscar Kightley,
Matuaitoga Posenai Mavaega, and the
incredibly talented cast of musicians,
performers, designers and technical
team who have come together
for this important storytelling.

But especially to Fonotī Pati Umaga
for allowing us to share his story
as a way of raising awareness of
the battles for the rights of our
Disability Community, and how we
can choose to overcome obstacles
in life. — *Maiava Nathaniel Lees*

He kōrero nā · He upu mai ia
Words from Fonotī Pati Umaga

I feel vulnerable and nervous to share my journey through the *Music Portrait of a Humble Disabled Samoan* production. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would be acting in a major show for Te Ahurei Toi o Tāmaki Auckland Arts Festival, telling my story.

But the amazing production team of director Maiava Nathaniel Lees, producer Sasha Gibb, writer Oscar Kightley and choreographer Neil Ieremia has developed a storyline that ultimately provides a fresh perspective from the lens of a Pacific disability lens, to challenge stigma and stereotypical attitudes through, music, culture and theatre. I am truly blessed and humbled to share this journey. — *Fonotī Pati Umaga*

Te Ahurei Toi o Tāmaki Auckland Arts Festival is a melting pot of shared experiences, whakaaro, live entertainment and kōrero every March.

Ko ngā mahinga toi whānui me te ahurea ki Tāmaki Makaurau o nāianei te pūmanawa o te Ahurei.

The Festival's lifeblood is arts and culture in contemporary Tāmaki Makaurau. We care deeply about celebrating artists and their kaupapa, serving the creatives and communities behind the works we present, honouring te reo and te ao Māori in all that we do, and contributing to a better city and society. That's us. Koia pū!

Every March you'll see a big reunion with our city's arts community alongside our mahi towards better accessibility and education opportunities for our audiences. We're also passionate about the works we curate and our collaboration with the many people who make those experiences happen. We strive to celebrate with generosity; human connection and manaakitanga will always be at the heart of what we stand for.

When we're on, we're on a mission to make Auckland an amazing place to socialise and be entertained in. Whether you're discovering the city for the first time or rekindling your love for its hidden gems, we truly believe that the Festival has something for everyone.

18 unforgettable days and nights.
For the ❤ of TĀMAKI MAKAURAU.

TE AHUREI TOI O TĀMAKI

AUCKLAND ARTS FESTIVAL

5—22 o Māehe · March 2026

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